Notes for talk at Saint Anselm's College

"Case Closed on Case Closed and the Mainstream Media"

A. The U.S. News and World Report's (Aug.30/Sept.6, 1993) special double issue on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, featuring an exclusive report by Gerald Posner, adapted from his book Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK, is just another in a long line of sorry examples of how the mainstream press in this country has bent over backwards to defend the deceitful official story of the JFK assassination presented by the Warren Commission.

(1) Much more on U.S. News and Mr. Posner in a minute, but first some background on the role of the press in disseminating the insubstantial, deceptive, and deceitful conclusions of the Warren Commission.

(a) This sordid tale goes back to the very beginning. The initial media response to the release of the Warren Report in Sept. '64 was overwhelmingly favorable, but also irresponsible. Respected journalists of the likes of Harrison Salisbury and James Reston of the N.Y. Times declared this report to thorough, definitive, proving beyond question that Lee Harvey Oswald, alone and unaided, killed President Jbhn F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

Such glowing praise was entirely unwarranted at the time because these same journalists did not have access to the evidence on which these conclusions were supposedly based: the 26 volume Hearings and Exhibits, not to mention the 300 cu.ft. of documents deposited in the National Archives later. (This evidence and documents thoroughly discrediting the prinipal conclusions of the Warren Reort.)

(b) Perhaps we should not be so harsh on these journalists because they, along with the American public, had been conditioned to accept the verdict that LHO was the sole assassin of President Kennedy. The F.B.I., along with the staff of the Warren Commission, leaked information to the press which tended to support their predetermined conclusion. The American people, nor the press for that matter, had any idea of the problems, contradictions, gaps in evidence, etc. that the Warren Commission staff was doing its darndesttto to obscure or sweep under the rug.

Probably the greatest example of this was J. Edgar Hoover himself leaking the conclusion of the initial F.B.I. report (compiled by Dec. 9, 1963) which declared Oswald the sole assassin. But no one had any idea of how grossly inadequate this report was until it was deposited in the National Archives well after the release of the WR. Its account of the crime itself was so deficient that it fails to mention one of the wounds to JFK (his throat wound) and it ignores another victim, James T. Tague. Given these ommissions the F.B.I. did not have to bother with trying to prove the "single-bullet theory".

Beyond this, the F.B.I. launched a campaign of influencing and monitoring the press on this issue which persisted well into the 1970s, even after Hoover's death. They established a "special correspondent's list", journlists they felt would accept without question what the F.B.I. told them, and they attacked others. (Contained in "94" files, Harold Weisberg stumbled on)

(c) CBS News has been a principal conduit for propaganda to bolster the government's case. From there "special of specials" (1967) through the "48hrs" special hosted by Dan Rather last year in an effort to rebut Oliver Stone's "JFK". Among other things, they had footage of interviews with various witnesses, such as Howard Brennan, without informing the viewers of the contradictions and inconsistencies in their actual testimony before the Warren Commission. (Indeed, Mr. Posner quotes one of Mr. Brennan's most ludicrous embellishments he volunteered to a nation-wide TV audience but neglected to bring out in testimony before the Warren Commission.)

Another favorite tactic is to locate some of the most irresponsible conspiracy theorists (in this case, Mark Lane and Oliver Stone) and let them spew forth their wild conjectures and paranoia.

(d) Just one example that I was personally involved with: around the time of the 25th anniversary of the assassination (Nov.'88) Time published a James Reston Jr. (following in his daddy's footsteps) exclusive in which he claimed that Oswald may have really been gunning for Connally. The testimony he cited in defense of this was selective and altered without indication to make it appear that there was evidence of Oswald's animosity toward Connally. Well, I sent a letter detailing these criticisms to Time, including a copy of the actual testimony (which had been altered), calling Mr. Reston a fraud. Although I did get a response from Time (not challenging any of my accusations), there was no retraction or correction. And I never heard a word from Mr. Reston.

This experience made me wonder if any thing was to be gained by writing U.S. News a similar letter in response to the more blatant and egregious errors and fabrications in the Posner exclusive.

So, without further ado, lets turn out attention to this U.S. News and World Report exclusive.

A. The Introduction to Mr. Posner's exclusive, "The Man With a Deadly Smirk" by Gerald Parshall is typical, if exaggerated, in its attack of conspiracy theorists.

(1) Mr. Parshall, as do most journalists, lumps together all critics as either wild-eyed conspiracy theorists or buffs, "beyond persuasion" as to the "truth" of the Warren Commission's finding that LHO was the sole assassin of JFK.

(2) Some of the theorists he chooses to tongue lash probably deserve it -- the likes of David Lifton, Jim Garrison, and even poor old Oliver Stone. But rejecting these wild conspiracy theories does not mean the only alternative is to embrace the flawed Warren Commission case.

(Mr. Parshall is obviously ignorant of the fact that the Warren Commission's conclusions are untenable based on their own evidence. Elaborate, perhaps.)

(3) Mr. Parshall, as does Posner himself, indulges in the flimsiest of photographic and psychological character assassination of LHO.

(a) Note the number of incriminating photos of Oswald: Penthouse; or the "previously unpublished photo of Oswald in Aug. '63", complete with the "deadly smirk" -- as if this proves something, as if that smirk was never wiped off his face until Ruby shot him. And as if Mrs. Parshall and Posner have never heard of the fallacy of such ad hominem arguments.

(Parenthetically, Prof. MacDonald knows of such techniques from his days as a college newspaper editor. In a good and noble cause, it appeared an effort was made to select the most unflattering photo of a faculty member, administrator, or politician who was being featured.)

(4) I don't care how sinister or mentally unstable Oswald may or may not have been, does the evidence show that Oswald committed the crime? Here, lets turn to Mr. Posner and the deceptive and deceitful way in which he attempts to "close this case". In the interests of time, I am going to have to be selective, but the examples I will present include clear and unequivocal instances of <u>fraud</u>.

(You ask yourself -- if I, a lowly professor of sociology at a small liberal arts college in Spartanburg, S.C., can document such fraud that a major magazine with a research staff and all those brilliant reporters, much less a publishing firm of the likes of Random House, can't do. It should make you wonder.)

(A) After a bit of subtle character assassination of LHO, Posner begins to recount Oswald's fateful trip to the TSBD that morning. He does not waste any time in misrepresenting the record:

Quote: "At 7:15 AM, when Lee Oswald.....

(Read actual testimony of Frazier & Randle)

(1) Mr. Posner also conveniently neglects to mention that a TSBD employee by the name of Dougherty who saw Oswald as he entered the building that morning swore that he had nothing in his hands.

(B) Posner relies on the testimony of one Charles Givens to place Oswald on the 6th floor of the TSBD about a half hour before the shooting. Mr. Posner does not tell you that Charles Givens' testimony before the Warren Commission was inconsistent with sworn statements he had made to the Dallas Police on the afternoon of the assassination in which he said nothing about going back to the 6th floor to retrieve some cigarettes and encounter LHO. (CE2003, p.27)

In fact, it was not until April 8, 1964 that this story of Mr. Givens appears in a deposition taken by Commission lawyer David Belin.

In statements to the Secret Service and FBI over the course of 3 months Givens never mentioned this incident. And in the opinion of Dallas police Lt. Jack Revill "...Givens would change his story for money." (he was a drug addict)

see: Sylvia Meagher's excellent article, "The Curious Testimony of Charles Givens".

(C) Sniper's nest -- Posner presents a diagram based on police photos that <u>admittedly</u> were take after those boxes had been moved!

Quote testimony of Lt. Day (4H 264-265)

**The diagram is also inconsistent with photos taken external to the TSBD.

(D) The drawing of the alleged assassination weapon -- a WWII vintage, Italian-made Mannlicher-Carcano. None of the information Posner provides gives you any idea of how decrpit the actual weapon was when it was found.

Quote selectively Sylvia Meagher (from the WC evidence) pp.101-103

(E) Mr. Posner distorts Oswald's skill as a marksman. It is one thing to say that he was "proficient" with an M1 up to 200yds, but let me quote the official judgment of Oswald's skill (which Posner must know about).

(1) No one has been able to duplicate Oswald's feat. The WC didn't even make a pretense to simulate the actual conditions under which Oswald would have had to perform his feat. And note the judgment of the expert for Failure Analysis which Mr. Posner utilizes selectively. (S.F. Chronicle review)

(F) Mr. Posner gives a graphic account of the fatal shot to the President's head, "sending blood, brain tissue, and skull fragments upward and to the front." (p.80) If so, then how was Dallas motorcycle cop, Billy Hargis, who was to the left and rear of the limousine, splattered with blood and brain tissue? (p.60 Post Mortem)

(G) Regarding Brennan's supposed eyewitness account of the shooting, Posner actually quotes the embellished version Brennan gave in an interview for CBS. His original testimony is far less compelling. He failed to pick Oswald out of a line-up twice. At one point he said the assassin was standing in the window when shooting, a physical impossibility. etc.... And you tell me how he saw the assassin with a smirk through that dirty glass off of which the sun was reflecting? (see p.78)

(H) Tippit murder: "At about 1:15 as Oswald walked briskly along 10th street..." (p.86) Mr. Posner who claims to have re-indexed the 26 volumes of hearings and exhibits conveniently ignores the affadavit of T.F. Bowley, who was the first person who got to Tippit agfter he was shot. His watch read 1:10 PM. He was also ignored by the WC, which could not even get Oswald to the scene of the Tippit murder by its own reconstructions by 1:15.

(I) "The girl in red fabrication" quote memo.

(J) The Magic Bullet: Steven Ambrose in praising this chapter refers to Posner's analysis as a "tour de force". I believe he should have said, or I would say: "tour de farce". Focus on p.94 "the shattered myth"

1. Mislocation of entry wound on JFK's back: ignores official death certificate signed by Admiral George G. Burkley. (3rd thoracic vertebra) Bullet holes in jacket and shirt. Autopsy face sheet , etc....

2. Entry wound in back not 6.5mm in diameter. It was an oval wound 7x4mm (autopsy). Exit wound, Posner ignores known measurement made at Parkland 3-5mm. Note significance of this.

3. Misrepresents thigh wound to Connally. Actually deposited a fragament. Ignores the fact that fragments of this bullet were deposited in all the wounds -- JFK's neck, Connallay's chest, wrist, & thigh.

4. Posner's boast that Failure Analysis test fired a bullet into a cadaver's wrist and it emerged in "better condition than 399". I'd like to see it. Not in article or book.

Conclusion:

I find it disgusting and appalling that Mr. Gerald Posner could not only perpetrate sucha fraud, but receive accolades from reviewers, not to mention the hundreds of thousands (if not millions) he may make, and hardly anyone in the press or publishing industry would raise any objections.

But this is not about Gerald Posner. It is about the continuing failure of basic institutions such as the press, the media, and the publishing industry. It engenders cynicism and distrust and rots the foundation of our society. Although John Milton was speaking about something different, I believe these lines have relevance to this case--

> "The hungry sheep look up but are not fed
> but swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw rot inwardly and
> foul contagion spreads."